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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [IV](#)  
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION YOUTH LEADERS VOW TO CONTINUE PROTESTS

REF: 10 ABIDJAN 73; 10 ABIDJAN 71

CLASSIFIED BY: Tanya Salseth, Political Officer, Department of State,  
Embassy Abidjan; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Youth leaders from the two main opposition parties in the RHDP coalition plan to continue demonstrations against the government despite the February 22 agreement reached by their party heads. They expressed surprise at the agreement to participate in a new government and reinstate the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) with new leadership, calling the agreement "against the interests of their political base." Judging by their rhetoric and the tone of opposition newspapers on February 23, it is possible that the agreement ultimately may be repudiated by the opposition's rank and file. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) RDR youth leader Karamoko Yayoro told Poloff on February 23 that members of his wing are incensed by the February 19 killings of five protestors in Gagnoa and the February 22 killing of three people (one protestor, two bystanders) by security and defense forces in Daloa. Yayoro said RDR youth took the February 13 RHDP communiquA, in which opposition leaders called on their followers to "oppose Gbagbo by all means possible," extremely seriously, and they plan to continue following that directive until they succeed in ousting Gbagbo. When asked why demonstrators had burned down houses of members of the President's camp and destroyed state property, including buses and government buildings, Yayoro told Poloff that violence was sometimes necessary to provoke change: "If we only march peacefully, no one will pay any attention." Opposition youth continue to clash with senior party members, Yayoro said, and they have warned the leadership that if their wishes are not taken into account, party members will find new leaders.

¶3. (C) In February 23 discussions with PDCI youth leader Kouadio Konan Bertin (known as KKB) and separately with Karamoko Yayoro, both expressed surprise at the concessions made by Alassane Ouattara (RDR) and Henri Konan Bedie (PDCI) in their February 22 meeting with Facilitator Blaise Compaore. Yayoro and KKB said that the decision to participate in the new government and to reinstate the CEI with a new leadership team would have no impact on their determination to "take our fight to the end." KKB pointedly told Poloff that he would not take orders from Bedie or senior PDCI leadership and would not call off protests, even if directly ordered to do so. He noted that RHDP coalition youth leaders have suspended protests today in order to discuss their reaction to the agreement reached by Ouattara and Bedie. Demonstrations will resume on February 24, he said.

¶4. (U) Although the government-run television station RTI and the state newspaper Fraternite Matin optimistically reported February 23 that the opposition would be joining the government,

opposition newspapers stated that the RHDP would stand firm against Gbagbo, disavow Soro, and refuse to join the government - mirroring many of the sentiments expressed by the two youth leaders.

15. (C) COMMENT: There is considerable division and confusion within the opposition following this latest development. Although Ouattara and Bedie have, in principle, agreed to join the new government and instate new leadership at the CEI, their youth wing has not been pacified. The killing of protestors in Gagnoa and Daloa has galvanized opposition youth, who seem intent on making their voices heard, even if it means going against the wishes of their elders. Whether this rift in the opposition is large enough to derail the agreements currently being negotiated remains to be seen; what is clear, however, is that the unemployed, frustrated youth who are burning tires and throwing rocks at buses seem to have less and less in common with the entrenched and well off senior leadership.

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